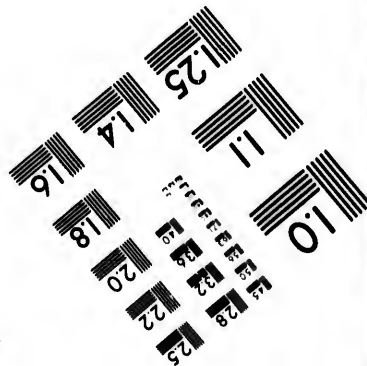
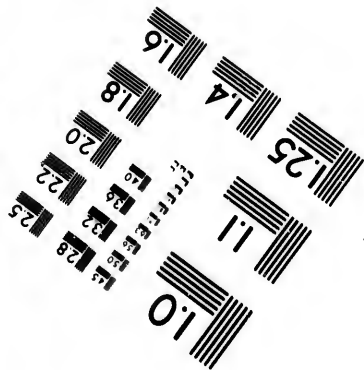
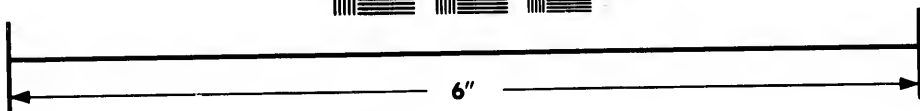
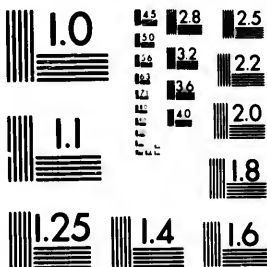


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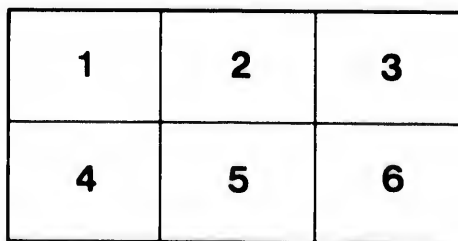
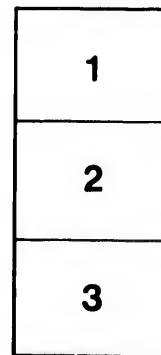
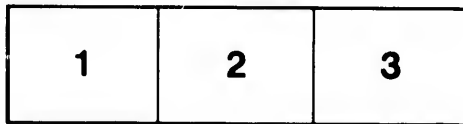
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# SPEECH

OF

## HON. E. D. BAKER, OF ILLINOIS,

ON

### THE OREGON QUESTION,

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 1846.

The Resolution from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, requiring the President to notify Great Britain of the intention of the United States to terminate the joint occupancy of Oregon, and to abrogate the convention of 1827, being under consideration in Committee of the Whole—

Mr. BAKER addressed the committee as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: In expressing the reasons which induce me to vote for the resolution under discussion, I shall comment upon many of the arguments urged by its opponents, in a spirit of freedom, and, I trust, of fairness.

In the first place, sir, I consider the American title up to 54° 40' virtually conceded in this debate. Most of those who oppose the notice affirm the territory to be ours. The gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. WINTHROP] has said he thought it susceptible of proof in a court of justice. The gentleman from Alabama, [Mr. YANCEY,] considering it ours, is in favor of "masterly inactivity;" not to acquire, but to gain, or to keep, what he admits to be ours. And although there have been some dissentient voices, they have scarcely marred the harmony and fullness of the admission. It is true, sir, that the honorable gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. HOLMES] has denied it, and so did the gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. BAYLY;] but I think, sir, we may safely confide them to the care of Mr. CALHOUN, whose opinions in behalf of the title of his own country should, with them at least, be weighty, if not conclusive.

I am highly gratified, Mr. Chairman, that such is the opinion of this House upon the question of

title. It would be strange if it were otherwise. How does that claim present itself here? Sir, it has been maintained not only by the highest authority, but by every authority known to our Constitution and our laws. It has been asserted for more than thirty years; it has been maintained by our Ambassadors abroad and our Secretaries at home; by successive Administrations, and by every Administration; it has been enforced in the declaration of a general principle, as in the declaration of Mr. Monroe, in 1823, "that the American continents are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Power;" it has been particularly and specifically relied upon by the President of the United States in his Inaugural Address to the people and to the world; it has received his earnest and solemn sanction in the late Annual Message to Congress; it has been the subject of long and repeated negotiation, in every stage of which it has been illustrated and confirmed. Nor, sir, has it been left to presidents or diplomatists: that claim has contributed to change an angry faction into a successful party; and "Oregon and Texas" have immortalized Polk and Dallas.

I know, Mr. Chairman, that there have been some efforts, here and elsewhere, to cast suspicion upon our title to the whole territory, from the fact that we have repeatedly offered to compromise upon the 49th degree of latitude. It is true, that we have made this offer three times; it is also true that it has been three times rejected. And, sir, it is to be remembered, that whenever we have done so, it has been accompanied with a denial of any title in Great Britain, and an express declara-

tion that it was an offer made, not from a conviction of right, but from a regard for peace and concord. Sir, I have been surprised to hear gentlemen rely upon this as evidence of title in Great Britain. There is no lawyer on this floor who does not well understand the principle upon which an offer of this kind is placed. A proposition to compromise is not an admission; it is never so treated, unless it contains the admission of a fact, which these propositions never did contain. It cannot be allowed in evidence in a court. Nor does it prove anything, save the pacific dispositions of the party who may make it.

Sir, whatever the motive may have been which prompted these offers cannot be material to this discussion; they were refused, they were withdrawn, they no longer exist. They were never considered in the light of an admission, and ought not so to be considered now. And it is, to me at least, most evident, that whatever were the grounds of our title before those offers were made, upon those grounds it must be considered to remain, unless, indeed, time and progress have widened the basis and strengthened the claim.

But, Mr. Chairman, I cannot refrain from expressing my surprise at the quarter from whence these doubts as to our title usually proceed. And, indeed, the whole argument of the honorable gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. HOLMES] is calculated to excite great astonishment. Has the honorable gentleman forgotten the Baltimore Democratic convention? or must I recall its resolutions to his mind? If I remember well, it was not until great progress had been made in its deliberations that South Carolina appeared at all; but when she did come, she condescended to approve the action of the convention, and gave her assent, with great dramatic effect, to its nominations and its principles.

Sir, amid the shout for "Polk and Dallas, Oregon and Texas," were Virginia and South Carolina silent? or did they lend force and fervor to a declaration which they seem now to think was a deliberate fraud upon the nation? And, sir, at the last session of Congress, when Mr. Polk had become known, and Texas was to be annexed, where was the southern wing of democracy then? Sir, they were ardent in their professions of an enlarged patriotism. The honorable gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. RHETT] voted for the Oregon bill of last session, with this very notice in it; that was a bill exercising the highest sovereign power over the territory—extending our laws, establishing our government, granting land; in short, sir, incorporating it as a part of these United States. Sir, these gentlemen were then extending "the area of freedom;" but when, by the aid of South Carolina in the Senate, the bill failed; when Texas is annexed, and another slave State added to the Union; then the democratic resolutions have lost their authority—Texas and Oregon are not twin stars, and gentlemen suddenly perceive that the star of Oregon is obscured by the clouds of war.

The gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. HOLMES] began the remarks just addressed to the committee, by a very fanciful allusion to a dark spirit now hovering over this fair land, and obscuring the bright face of heaven. How long, sir, has this vision tortured the gentleman's imagination? since when has it frightened him from his propriety?

If I remember that distinguished gentleman increased when course at the last session of Congress, there were expectations come not spirits enough in the "upper air" to damp the passion of Congress. As long as Texas was in doubt, Mexico and many of it might be contemned and England defied. It was not enough that Texas was already possessed of the most of those republican institutions, but she must have her star blazoned upon our banner; and at the very moment when Mexico was threatening war for not for it which enlisted the sympathies of the civilized world against us, a bill passed this House by a very large majority to exercise the highest attributes of sovereignty over the whole territory of Oregon. Where then was the honorable gentleman's vision of war? Were the wings of the dark spirit furled? Or is this but the "dark hour" which, in common with other seers and sages, the honorable gentleman is subject?

I desire, sir, before I proceed to discuss the arguments of gentlemen, to address myself to the suggestion so often made, that notice is war. They will not notice, Mr. Chairman, is a stipulation of the convention; it is the agreement of the parties; it provides for a period of twelve months between the notice and the abrogation of the convention itself; and the mere statement seems to me to be an answer to the idea that it is, or of itself can be, war. It is nothing more nor less than proof of our desire to have the question determined; it asserts no right, it suggests no remedy. It will, undoubtedly, bring us more directly to the consideration of both Governments the necessity of settling the question; and it is a question that should be settled. But it is a measure consistent with the treaty, it springs out of the treaty, and it will scarcely be contended, that a respectful compliance with the conditions of the convention can be considered as war, or as of itself leading to war. Let me ask, if Great Britain were to give this notice to us, (as she unquestionably might do,) would that be war, or cause of war? No, sir; it would undoubtedly convince us that she was in earnest; we should feel, more than we now do, the necessity of some decided action; but the question of war or peace would be determined with reference to our rights. If, after that notice, Great Britain should not only claim, but attempt to take, what is "unquestionably ours," I trust we should manifest a becoming sense of what might be due to ourselves; and, in this event, unjust aggression might lead to war. But the notice would do no such thing; it is pacific, because provided for by the treaty; it is peaceful, because it leaves every mode of settlement still open to both Powers; and it is proper, because it tends to the immediate settlement of a difficulty, which time certainly does not render more easy of adjustment. Mr. Chairman, while discussing the propriety of notice in this point of view, let me observe, that the notice does not prevent a settlement on any basis proposed. Does any gentleman desire arbitration? The notice does not reject it. Is compromise insisted upon? The notice is silent upon that point. Is forty-nine the true line? The notice does not deny it. No, sir, I repeat, the notice may tend to preserve peace; but the notice itself cannot lead to war. It is an act which manifests our desire, if you please our determination, that the question shall be settled; and, Mr. Chairman, it is nothing more.

But, sir, if the objections thus urged against the notice are matter of surprise, how is our surprise

increased when we examine from whence these objections come. At the last, and at a preceding session of Congress, Oregon was before the House, in doubt, Mexico and many of the very gentlemen who now opposed it. It was then, and I believe, the first time that notice was given of this very notice; and, what is more remarkable, it was not given by the gentleman who now opposed the notice, but by one of those who then opposed the notice, and who was at the very moment an advocate of that bill without notice, and actually voted for it with the notice included. Sir, that bill was provided for an exercise of the highest attributes of sovereignty; it was liable to every objection that the most timid now urge against this measure. It was based upon our right to the whole of Oregon; without notice it violated the convention; with the insertion of the notice, it was a practical enforcement of our claim to the whole territory. Where were these gentlemen then? Where were their lectures upon peace, their abhorrence of war? Then they were willing to take possession of disputed territory without even the form of notice. Now they will not even give notice of an intention to assert "our unquestionable title." Then, England must be defied; now, she is to be feared. Sir, I leave to honorable gentlemen the task of reconciling these positions; but, to my mind, they evince neither statesmanship nor wisdom.

I proceed now, Mr. Chairman, to examine the argument, drawn from the horrors of war, as depicted by gentleman on this floor, and more particularly by the gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. HOLMES.] I think I have shown that if we do go to war, it will not be on account of this notice. Sir, how will this war come? Gentlemen admit that "all Oregon" is ours. Shall we claim it, or surrender it? If we claim it, and war grows out of that claim, we battle for our rights, as we have done before. If we surrender that claim, if we yield territory which we admit to be ours, from dread of a foreign power, we court "a dishonorable peace." Sir, there may be occasions when a nation may yield her past pretensions in a spirit of conciliation and friendship without dishonor. There may be claims in their nature doubtful, of which the proof may be uncertain. They may be the proper subject of compromise, and the interests of peace and humanity may be advanced by moderation and forbearance. But most of the gentlemen who have opposed this notice have not formerly considered this claim in that light, and they do so now speak of it now. They affirm our title, they claim the whole territory, they will not yield a foot of it; but they will not give notice, and they will only consent to "a masterly inactivity." Sir, to those who claim the whole territory, I beg leave to suggest that nearly thirty years have elapsed, and we are no nearer possession than we were at first. In the mean time, our offers of compromise have been rejected; our title has been formally and solemnly reiterated by our Government; our citizens have been encouraged to "possess the land;" and the President, in his last Message to this House, declares the whole territory to be ours. In my opinion, sir, we have passed the point at which "inactivity" is wisdom. We have spoken too loudly before to be silent now. And while I express no opinion as to the wisdom of that course which has placed us in our present position, I am willing to abide all its responsibilities.

The gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. RHETT,] in remarking upon what has been said as to hon-

orable peace, observed, in a very pointed and beautiful manner, that the "honor of a nation can scarcely be separated from its essential interests." If he means that the honor of a nation is its essential interest, I am happy to agree with him; but if, as I suppose, he means to apply his remark to the question under discussion, and affirm that the honor of the nation is not involved because its essential interests would suffer in enforcing our claim, then, sir, I totally dissent. The honor of a nation is its highest interest, because it determines not only the form, but the duration of its existence and its power. It is for this reason that unsullied faith is honor and interest combined; that public integrity confirms the one, and promotes the other. But, sir, in the sense of the gentleman from South Carolina, the honor of a nation may very often demand a sacrifice of those immediate interests, which the gentleman seems to consider as essential. Tested by his rule, what war has been honorable, unless it may be a war for immediate national preservation? The gentleman's close reading of history may teach him that the cost of a war almost always exceeds the entire value of the thing in dispute, unless the character and the honor of the nation are to be considered as "above all price." Estimated in dollars and cents, regarding only our immediate interests, those interests which the honorable gentleman so directly alluded to, the late war with Great Britain was a miserable speculation; the cost of the war was more than the whole value of the commerce affected, either by the Berlin and Milan decrees, or the British orders in council! We lost ten times as many men on the field of battle as the British could have taken by any system of impressment. But, sir, the essential interest of the nation was, the preservation of its honor. It was a wise and noble expenditure of blood and treasure; it gave us rank among nations, it gained us the admiration of the world, it guarded our commerce, it protected our citizens, it has given us thirty years of "honorable peace,"—peace sweeter, because won through suffering and trial. And I trust, sir, it has left us lessons of patriotism and courage, which, I am sure, the honorable gentleman from South Carolina will not be the first to forget.

It is thus, sir, that honor and interest are blended in a Republican Government: it is impossible to separate them; and it is because I regard them both, that I desire this notice to prevail. I scarcely know, Mr. Chairman, whether it is proper to consider the remarks of the gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. HOLMES,] who has just spoken, as a grave argument; it is rather a dissertation upon the "horrors of war," an eulogium upon the power of England, and a confession, most humiliating if it be true, of our own weakness. If I understand him, he supposes that the days of chivalry are gone by; and, therefore, England will receive the twelve months' notice, and attack us at once. It has long been supposed that the last vestiges of "chivalry" have lingered in the "gallant little State." Does the gentleman mean that its declining sunbeams no longer irradiate her valleys? If so, sir, a prolific source of eloquence is dried at the fountain. But his idea, that England will turn pirate, and rob us on the high seas, can certainly not deserve a serious reply.

If war should grow out of this Oregon question,



it may not be a "little war;" but neither will it be a hasty one. It is not upon a sudden impulse that the peace of the world will be broken. Nor will England adopt a course which has been left for the excited imagination of the gentleman to suggest.

Mr. Chairman, I admit the power of England; it is a moral as well as physical supremacy. It is not merely her fleets and her armies; it is not merely her colonies and her fortresses; it is far more than these: There is a power in her history which compels our admiration and excites our wonder. It presents to us the field of Agincourt, the glory of Blenheim, the fortitude of "fatal Fontenoy," and the fortunes of Waterloo. It reminds us how long she ruled the empire of the wave—from the destruction of the Armada, to the glories of Trafalgar. Nor is her glory confined to arms. In arts, in science, in literature, in credit, in commerce, she "sits superior." Hers are "the princes of the mind." She gives laws to learning and limits to taste. The watchfires of her battlefields yet flash defiance and warning to her enemies; and her dead heroes and statesmen stand as sentinels upon immortal heights, to guard the glory of the living. Sir, it is thus I view the power of Great Britain; and I am therefore not concerned in the description of it given by the gentleman from South Carolina. But I confess, sir, that this conviction of her greatness makes a very different impression on his mind and mine. He recounts her fleets, her armies, her steam-marine, her colonies, as reasons for what I understand to be submission. He has drawn a picture of our commerce destroyed, our flag dishonored, and our sailors imprisoned. He imagines our forts dismantled, our cities burned, our lakes possessed by the enemy; and, worse than all, our industry destroyed, and the spirit of our people broken. Sir, what is this but an appeal to our fears? If it be, it is an appeal which will find no echo in the depths of the American heart. I, or the contrary, would point to the glory of England in a spirit of emulation. She has attained her greatness by her fortitude and her valor, as well as by her wisdom. She has not faltered, and therefore she has not failed. If she has sometimes been grasping and arrogant, she has at least not "bleached when the storm was highest." It is true, sir, that she has steadily pursued the line of a great policy; and for that policy she has dared much and done more. She has considered her honor and her essential interests as identical, and she has been able to maintain them. Sir, I would follow her example. I would not desire to set up pretensions upon light and trivial grounds. I would be careful about committing the national honor upon slight controversies; but when we have made a deliberate claim in the eyes of the world; when we persist that it is "clear and unquestionable;" when compromise has been offered and refused; when territory upon the American continent is at stake; and when our opponent does not even now claim title in herself, I would poise myself upon the magnanimity of the nation, and abide the issue.

It appears to me, Mr. Chairman, that England will not abandon what I think to be her general, wise, and statesmanlike course, for this disputed and barren territory. Unlike us, she has neither honor nor essential interests involved in the question. She has asserted no title in herself. She is

only contending for the privilege of colonizing; and I do not believe that any good reason can be given why she would risk a war with us. England will no doubt see that she has much to lose, and that she can gain nothing. I repeat, sir, I do not think that our assertion of our right to the whole territory ought to lead to war, if England still pursues the wise and statesmanlike policy by which she has been distinguished.

But, Mr. Chairman, suppose it to be otherwise, how does the argument stand then? We assert this territory to be ours. The President believes it—our negotiator believes it—this House believes it—the country believes it. But, say gentlemen, England will go to war. In my opinion this will not be so; but if she does, is that a reason for surrendering our rights? If it be, national honor is indeed an empty name, and the spirit of our fathers is dead within us. I know that whenever a western man touches upon this view of the subject, it renders him liable to a sneer at what gentlemen are pleased to call "western enthusiasm." I desire to treat this as an American question, and I shall not be driven from that course. I am not one of those who supported Mr. Polk; I used the utmost of my little ability to prevent his election; and when Mr. Clay was beaten, I confess I felt as the friends of Aristides may be supposed to have felt when he was driven from Athens. I, of course, had no share in the Democratic Baltimore convention. I thought then, and I think now, that it was unwise and unfair to attempt to make "Oregon" a party watchword. And I believe that much of the difficulty in which we now find ourselves arises from that course. But when the question is made—when our title is asserted—when the opinions of our people, based perhaps upon the action of the Government, have become fixed, and we are willing to maintain our rights at any sacrifice, then many of the movers of this agitation began to flatter; some have got Texas, and are content—some have become enamored of "white-robed peace"—some clamor for 49° and compromise—but they all join in deprecating "western enthusiasm." Sir, the West will be true to its convictions. I believe that portion of the West which sustained Mr. Polk will still be for the "whole of Oregon." And, sir, I think that those who opposed him, and many of whom believed that the Democratic outburst for Oregon was a mere party manoeuvre, will now consider it an American question, and stand by the country. Such, sir, will be my course on this floor. I am a Whig, and I shall remain a Whig; but I am convinced we have the right to the whole territory, and I am ready to maintain it.

Sir, there was another remark made in the course of this debate, which may merit a reply. It was said that it was the restless spirit of western men which caused this trouble by their occupation of Oregon, and they were ridiculed for seeking homes across the Rocky mountains. I desire gentlemen to remember that it has been the policy of this Government to encourage the settlement of the West. Our whole system of land laws, and especially our pre-emption laws, have that tendency. And as to Oregon itself, this House has received with the greatest favor for several preceding sessions, a bill for the express purpose of encouraging settlement on the borders of the Pacific.

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Sir, it is to the spirit which prompts these settlers that we are indebted for the settlement of the western States. The men who are going to beat down roads and level mountains, to brave and to overcome the terrors of a wilderness, are our brethren and our kinsmen. It is a bold and free spirit; it has in it the elements of greatness. They will march not

"Like some poor exile, bending with his wo,  
To stop too fearful, and too faint to go;"

but they will go with a free step—they will bear with them the arts of civilization, and they will found a western empire. Sir, it is possible they may not receive protection, but at least they should be shielded from reproach.

There is another mode of argument relied on in this debate, however, which perhaps does them more harm, because it proposes a "masterly inactivity" at their expense. Some gentlemen say, with the honorable member from Alabama, [Mr. YANCEY,] that the whole of Oregon is ours; but that we must not give notice, but rely upon time and settlement. Sir, is it proposed to encourage emigration, and not prepare to defend it? Shall we invite our people to settle Oregon, in a tone of voice so low that England may not hear it? Shall we expose them to collision with a foreign Government, and avoid all responsibility for our act? Sir, I trust not. If the country is ours, let us claim it; or rather, since we have claimed it, let us stand by the claim; but do not let us resort to the meanness of doing by stealth what we dare not do openly, or encourage our citizens to settle in a territory which we will not even assist them to preserve. But the argument does not stop here. It is gravely alleged, as a reason for this course, that our friends and brethren who go there may soon be able to take the territory, and then we may give "the notice." Sir, this would be equally unjust to England and our own people—to England, because it violates the spirit of the convention of 1827, which excluded all title by occupation or settlement after its date; and unjust to our own people, because we expose them to all the hardships of the settlement, and all the dangers of the conflict, to take for us what we fear to take for ourselves.

It is very apparent, Mr. Chairman, that these arguments, together with the attempt to create the impression that this is a western measure, have a common origin; they are confined to one portion of this Union, or but feebly echoed from any other. There is an impression among what has been called the "southern wing of democracy" that war would affect their "peculiar institutions"—that our claim to Oregon would lead to war; and, therefore, they are ready to abandon it. It is true that some of these gentlemen still claim the "whole of Oregon" in words, but when they are called upon to act, they only propose "masterly inactivity;" they eulogize the western rifle, but they will not protect the bold pioneer who bears it. And while they affect to consider this notice a western measure, they do not attempt to conceal the motives of sectional and local interest which lead them to oppose it. The honorable gentleman from Alabama [Mr. YANCEY] appeals to the democracy of the South, and tells them that war will rob them of the fruits of their late political victory; "that the black tariff" will be sustained; and that

war will be not only protection, but prohibition. Sir, I would not determine peace or war upon such grounds. It is a question involving the welfare of the whole nation, and in that view only should it be decided. But, not content with this admission of local feeling, this narrow and sectional and petty objection, the honorable gentleman proceeds to discuss the results of war, and draws an argument from victory itself against this notice. He says we can take Canada, but when we do, it will be a conquest for the benefit of the North and East, and to the injury of the South and West. Sir, it is most unfortunate for us that we are pressed by arguments so numerous and yet so opposite. On the one hand, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. HOLMES] portrays defeat and disgrace; on the other, the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. YANCEY] depicts triumph and conquest; but whether our banner shall trail in the dust, or "challenge the sky," the argument is against us. If we are defeated, the nation suffers; if we are triumphant, the democracy and the South are trodden down.

Mr. Chairman, this argument against the extension of our territory by conquest has been made before; it was addressed to this House at its last session. The annexation of Texas at the last session was the beginning of a new policy; it was opposed as virtually overturning the compromises of the Constitution, by admitting a foreign State, and disturbing the "balance of power in the Union." But these reasons did not convince gentlemen then, and those compromises were disturbed. It does not, in my opinion, become those who were most active in the establishment of this principle, to limit its application. I do not see why the "area of freedom" should not be extended North as well as South; and, although I do not want Canada, and do not desire a war, yet certainly I should not be restrained from giving this notice by any dread that Canada might be "annexed."

But the honorable gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. HOLMES,] following the course of his eloquent colleague, [Mr. RILEY,] persists in treating this notice as leading to war, and they both indulge in a description of its effects in a political point of view. While the gentleman from Alabama thinks it would injure democracy by sustaining the tariff, they, with the peculiar inclinations of their school, look to consolidation. Sir, if the claim is unjust it should be abandoned; we should ask "nothing that is not right;" but if it be well founded, surely gentlemen would not surrender American territory for fear of "consolidation." This is an argument against any war for any purpose, defensive as well as otherwise; for just in proportion to the emergency must be the greatness of the effort, and in proportion to the power of the Government, the danger of consolidation will be increased. No, sir; this dread of concentrated power agrees but poorly with the gentleman's description of our weakness; and the fear of a "military chieftain," who would exchange the "sword for the sceptre," will never cause a gallant people to abandon what is "clearly and unquestionably ours."

I have said that I trust there will be no war; but I should be glad if gentlemen who are for the "whole of Oregon" will tell me how they expect to avoid it. Ask them if they will surrender the territory, and they say no. Ask them if they will

give the "notice," and they say no. Sir, they will do nothing. Are we any nearer exclusive possession than we were in 1818? Has time or delay accomplished anything? Is not the question more embarrassed now than it was then? and is not the purpose of England, if we can fairly judge it, more adverse to our views now than formerly? The convention of 1827 was not a treaty of *settlement*; it excluded the idea of colonization; and yet England, it is said, claims the territory now, for the ultimate purpose of building up a colony on that coast. Can it be true, then, that delay will lessen the difficulty? No, sir; if it can be settled without an appeal to arms, now is the auspicious moment. Delay but extends the interests of both Governments, and multiplies the obstacles to concert; and if, most unfortunately, the ultimate arbiter must be the sword, delay will neither lessen the horrors of conflict, nor quicken the ardor of preparation.

Sir, in every point of view the question should be settled; it enters with an evil influence into every circle of human concern; it becomes an element of party warfare; it affects and varies the value of property; it paralyzes the energies of commerce, and causes industry to be uncertain of its reward. I repeat, that I desire peace and hope for peace; but I consider it wisdom that the whole question should be determined now. And, sir, I think this notice will tend to preserve, not to destroy, pacific relations. It brings the matter to an issue; the two nations will stand face to face; they will be fully conscious of the importance of their decision; the appeals made for the preservation of the peace of the world may reach the hearts of both. I think England will see that she will not pursue her accustomed policy to risk a war, which can add nothing to her glory or her power, for a barren shore on a distant sea. And it may be that the same considerations which induced the President to offer to accept the 49th parallel as the dividing line, after he had declared our title to the whole "clear and unquestionable," may still prompt him to surrender what he has told the country and the world is American territory.

I shall address myself for a moment to the argument drawn from our supposed weakness, and on which so much reliance is placed. It is asked, how can we contend with England? Where are our ships, our cannon, our money, and our credit? The gentleman from South Carolina predicts its disaster with the fury of the Pythoness, if not with the wisdom of the Oracle. Sir, it is not an argument becoming an American Congress. I do not undervalue England. I have heard with regret very many things said of her in this debate, which I think were neither wise nor just. Still less would I undervalue our own capacity to maintain our rights. In the two wars which we have maintained for independence and for national honor, we did not stop to adopt this policy of calculation—a policy which is as fatal to national as to individual honor.

Sir, it is a most reasonable course for a nation to weigh deliberately and well the consequences of any official and solemn declaration of her policy and her rights, and perhaps most of all should she ponder over an assertion to a claim to territory; but in proportion to the hesitation with which she makes it, should be the promptness and vigor by which she maintains it. To make a reckless claim

and a shameful abandonment would have disgraced the pettiest prince that ever stumbled from a throne. To us I trust it is impossible. This nation, by its Chief Executive, has declared our rights. They are territorial rights upon this continent. They spring not only from traditions of discovery—from doubtful exploration—from qualified settlement, but from the principles of an American system, "and they must be preserved." If to maintain them war must follow, we deplore the necessity, but we do not fear the result. I shall indulge in no speculation as to comparative strength, since no comparison ought to change our conclusion; but I may remark that our present defenceless condition is more apparent than real, and that what is thought to be our weakness is really a source of strength. We have no peace establishment of fleets and armies, like that of England or France; but the means which they devoted to its support has remained in the hands of our people—a productive capital to employ our energies and develop our resources. We have cultivated the arts of peace. They have given us more strength to forge the "thunderbolts of war." I know, sir, it will take time to prepare, but before a crisis shall arrive we can seize it by the forelock. The call of the Executive, like the foot of Pompey in the Senate, will rouse up armed legions; but, sir, one "Pharsalia" will not destroy the energies of this Republic.

Mr. Chairman, the whole argument of gentlemen on this branch of the subject, is not so much an array of reasons against the war which they now apprehend, as against any war for any purpose. A republican Government is always comparatively unprepared for war at its beginning; but should Republics, therefore, yield their rights and abandon their territories? Sir, to state the argument is to answer it. The gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. HOLMES,] who manifests so lively a sense of the danger to which war would expose us, must remember that a dread of war does not always prevent it. It was a fine conception of the ancient poet, that the chariot of Mars was drawn by flight and fear. It was Sir Boyle Roche, I believe, who said, "that the best way to avoid danger was to meet it plump." The genius of the Greek and the humor of the Irishman have given expression to a sentiment worthy of reflection.

It will be perceived that, throughout the course of these remarks, I have not only treated the title to the whole of Oregon as admitted by a large majority of this House, but I have chosen to assume the validity of our rights as the basis upon which my own opinions as to this notice have been formed; and I desire now to give, in a few words, the views which I entertain upon that question.

It is not necessary for me to express any opinion at this moment as to the wisdom and policy of Mr. Polk's inaugural address; but I may say that I consider this nation as bound to stand by the claim which is made, and that there are insuperable objections to the relinquishment of any portion of Oregon to Great Britain. It is to be remembered, that while we claim the territory by discovery and treaty, Great Britain, denying our title, does not set up title in herself. She says "she has rights in Oregon"—she has citizens there—and she contemplates colonization. It is precisely in this state of things, Mr. Chairman, that

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what has been called in this debate "manifest destiny," becomes an important consideration.

In the few remarks which I addressed to the House on a former occasion, I glanced at this view of the subject hastily and briefly, and I shall now devote a few moments to its application.

I suppose, sir, that when Mr. Monroe made his famous declaration of 1823, he designed it to have some practical application. That portion of it referring to European interference with South American politics was occasioned by the attempt of the Holy Alliance to assist the Bourbons to recover an ascendancy in South America. But that portion of it which denied that "any unsettled portion of the continent was the subject for future *European colonization*," was intended to apply to the northwest coast of the Pacific, the very territory in question: it was so treated in the debate on the Panama mission, and Judge White, of Tennessee, expressly so stated in that discussion. A moment's reflection will make it apparent that this was its object—it was indeed the only considerable territory to which it could refer. I do not contend, sir, that when a declaration of this general character is made by a President or Congress that we are bound to sustain it by force of arms whenever its principles are violated. But I insist that it was a statement of a great American policy; that it well became our growing importance; that subsequent events—our increase in population, in States, in commerce, in all the constituents of greatness—give it still greater authority. And I submit that this is the very case which demands its practical application. This territory is unsettled—it is on this continent—it is contiguous to this Union. As long as it was merely ground for hunting and trapping, and trade with Indians, it was of but little consequence. But now the wave of population breaks across the peaks of the Rocky mountains, and mingles its spray with the Pacific; it is becoming settled, and will soon be of commercial importance. The question is, shall we permit it to remain open to foreign colonization? I say that question should be determined, judging of us not merely as we are, but as we probably shall be.

The doctrine that a nation has a right to regard the preservation of its vital interests, in such a controversy, is to be found "in the best considered state papers of modern times." It is the province of enlightened statesmanship to look forward, and no statesman can fail to perceive the importance of that territory to this Union. To divide the country would be to build up rival and conflicting interests—to permit England to erect a commercial, if not a military Gibraltar on the Pacific coast. It would be to surrender all chance of fair and equal rivalry in commercial enterprise in that sea. It would be to put England in possession of ano-

ther key to control what may be the seat of a vast commerce. Mr. Chairman, I think that to abandon the principles of Mr. Monroe's declaration would be to filter in the path which Providence has marked out for us, and to prove ourselves unworthy of a high destiny. It is not thus that England has "halted by the wayside." She has gone onward with a steady and imperial march. She has seen her destiny, and has pursued it; and she has made a small island on the borders of Europe the seat of the mightiest power the world has ever known. The seat of our power is a vast continent. We are widely separated from Europe, and unconnected with its politics. In the very spring and vigor of our youth, we, too, are pressing onward with the steps of a giant. Ours will be the great predominating Power on this continent; and our permanent peace and our essential interests will be jeopardized by any foreign colonization.

Would Great Britain permit us to colonize any portion of India contiguous to her possessions? Would she permit us to "annex" any independent State, if there were one on her East Indian frontier? Would we permit her to conquer or purchase Cuba? No, sir; no, sir. It is in this sense I would apply the doctrine of "manifest destiny," so often remarked upon in the debate. It is an expression which I did not originate, and which does not convey my idea; but, sir, I would not be willing to shut my eyes to the argument contained in the phrase itself. The doctrine of natural boundary sometimes establishes a title to a country; a deep river, a high chain of mountains, even a change in production, may mark the line between nations. Sir, the title for which I contend is not so feebly established; a rolling ocean, an unsettled country, a contiguous territory, all lend force to our pretensions. Providence has separated us from the Old World, and our policy, as well as our institutions, should perpetuate the division.

In conclusion of these remarks, it only remains for me to say, that I am as far as any gentleman on this floor from a desire to precipitate this country and Great Britain into a war. I believe that peace is the policy of both countries. We are running a career of earnest (I trust, not ungenerous) rivalry, and we are both disseminating the English language, the principles of free government, and the blessings of religious toleration. Yet I believe that this notice is the best mode of maintaining peace, if it can be maintained upon honorable terms; but if we can only preserve peace by a surrender of American territory, by adopting a course as impolitic as it would be degrading, I shall give my vote for every measure the honor of the country may demand, under what, I trust, is a true sense of my responsibility as a legislator and a man.

